

AIDS TREATMENT NEWS

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AIDS Treatment News

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Statement of Purpose:

AIDS Treatment News reports on experimental and standard treatments, especially those available now. We interview physicians, scientists, other health professionals, and persons with AIDS or HIV; we also collect information from meetings and conferences, medical journals, and computer databases. Long-term survivors have usually tried many different treatments, and found combinations that work for them. *AIDS Treatment News* does not recommend particular therapies, but seeks to increase the options available.

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Back issues, and discounts for multiple subscriptions, are available; contact our office for details.
Please send U.S. funds: personal check or bank draft, international postal money order, or travelers checks. VISA, Mastercard, and purchase orders also accepted.
To protect your privacy, we mail first class without mentioning AIDS on the envelope, and we keep our subscriber

Washington to urge the federal government to stop preventing doctors from prescribing marijuana as medicine.

Empty Antibiotic Pipeline Critically Endangers Public: IDSA Report.....

A huge decrease in the number of fundamentally new antibiotics -- driven by commercial not scientific problems -- seriously threatens public health in the near future, as bacteria develop resistance to the existing drugs, and previously treatable infections will often be fatal.

Clinical Trials: Philadelphia Hospitals Combine to Form "Supersite"

and Reduce Delays.....

Major medical research institutions in Philadelphia are working together to allow pharmaceutical companies to conduct clinical trials in multiple institutions with a single contract and single approval, reducing paperwork and preventing unnecessary research delays.

AIDS Treatment and Related Conference Calendar (Starting September 2004).....

Here are meeting dates and Web links for upcoming conferences most likely to interest our readers.

ADAP Activists Needed in All U.S. States and Territories

by John S. James

The AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP) is the payer of last resort for HIV-related drug costs for persons with limited income. For several reasons -- people living longer, higher drug costs, and political neglect -- this program has become critically underfunded over the last few years. ADAP is a federal program that usually requires matching contributions by states. Therefore it needs state-by-state as well as federal organizing, and the health of the program varies greatly among states. Recently the crisis has eased in some states due to the \$20 million

promised by President Bush to relieve waiting lists. But this is a short-term fix only -- and waiting lists are just one of several kinds of restrictions that deny treatment to patients with no other way to pay for it.

If action is not taken now, the crisis could spread to all states, and next year thousands of Americans could be denied HIV treatment they need.

Many people want to work on ADAP but haven't known where to start.

How to Help

What ADAP needs most is activists willing to learn about the issues and get involved in working with others, either nationally or in their state or area. It also needs a larger group of people who can respond to critical action alerts, even if they cannot commit the time to follow the issue in detail.

Those who cannot get heavily involved but want to help occasionally could join only the Treatment Action Network (TAN) of Project Inform. They will receive occasional action alerts on Federal issues where their support is particularly important. For more information about TAN, click the "Treatment Action Network" link on Project Inform's fact sheet (below), or go directly to <https://secure.fauldhouse.com/projinf/tanlist2/tanlist.php4>

For the latest in-depth information, the most important source is the Saveadap list. You can join at <http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/saveadap/> This email list, run by the Save ADAP Committee (which now is part of the AIDS Treatment Activist Coalition), is used by activists nationwide to share information. Currently it averages about 100 messages per month (three to four emails per day).

For ADAP background, see:

* Project Inform's fact sheet, "The AIDS Drug Assistance Program Crisis," <http://www.projectinform.org/org/ADAP.html> (single page, for general information);

* The AIDS Treatment Activist Coalition's *AIDS Treatment News* #404, August 27, 2004

ADAP site, <http://www.atac-usa.org/adap.html> (for information about the most important projects now going on, including ADAP funding information for each state);

* AIDS Treatment and Data Network's Access Project, <http://www.atdn.org/access/> (click on your state for eligibility, contact, and other basic information about its ADAP program).

Also, authoritative but sometimes technical ADAP information can be found at Title II Community AIDS National Network (TIICANN), <http://www.tiicann.org/> For example, <http://www.tiicann.org/eligibility.php> tells how state officials or activists could help their state stretch ADAP to cover more people by making sure that other programs are used to pay bills when possible -- or help their state fully use existing Federal laws to prevent persons who go back to work from losing access to medical care if they are declared no longer disabled.

ACT UP: Enormous Worldwide Attention to New York Demos

by John S. James

Four AIDS demonstrations at the Republican National Convention (RNC) in New York got hundreds of stories in major print and broadcast media in the U.S. and many other countries, bringing AIDS and debt relief into everyday conversation worldwide.

* "Naked Truth" demo ("The emperor has no clothes"): On August 26, a few days before the start of the RNC, nine members of ACT UP New York and ACT UP Philadelphia stopped traffic and took off their clothes in front of Madison Square Garden, where the convention would be held. All had "Stop AIDS" and "Drop the Debt" painted on their bodies. They were not arrested for more than ten minutes, while press that had been brought to the scene took pictures. Two others were arrested for draping a banner nearby.

"Drop the Debt" referred to the debt of poor countries. Every year the world's

poorest countries in Africa alone pay about \$15,000,000,000 to the richest, often on debts that clearly can never be repaid. This is about the amount of money needed to control AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria throughout the world. On October 1 the finance ministers of the G-7 countries will consider a major debt-cancellation announcement at their meeting in Washington D.C.

* Still We Rise: On August 30, a coalition of more than 50 New York City community-based organizations -- including Housing Works, NYC AIDS Housing Network, Positive Health Project, ACT UP New York, African Services Committee, Community HIV/AIDS Mobilization Project, Gay Men's Health Crisis, Latino Commission on AIDS and Minority Taskforce on AIDS -- marched on Madison Square Garden. Still We Rise demanded housing for the homeless; immigrants' and welfare rights; health care and HIV services; and justice for those in the court and prison system. The march united many New Yorkers who struggle with more than one of these issues.

* Inside the RNC: On September 1 eleven demonstrators, mostly from ACT UP New York and ACT UP Philadelphia, disrupted the Republican youth convention on the floor of Madison Square Garden, despite the tightest security at a political convention in U.S. history. They were arrested by the Secret Service after protesting during a speech by White House Chief of Staff Andrew Card. The activists stood up, blew whistles, unfurled a banner, and chanted, "Bush lies -- Stop AIDS -- Drop global debt now."

* Grand Central Station: On September 2 about 150 members of Housing Works suddenly converged in Grand Central Station for a demonstration, with balloon banners and a banner drop reading, "America Has AIDS. Our next president must stop the plague." They chanted, "Fight AIDS Not Iraq." Twenty-six were arrested, mostly for refusing to leave.

ACT UP marched with other demonstrations as well, including the Poor People's March. For photos, stories, and 20

links see

http://www.actupny.org/reports/rnc_nyc.html

You Can Help

You can help ACT UP and others take advantage of the current momentum and opportunities.

Both ACT UP New York and ACT UP Philadelphia meet every Monday evening. For current information check the Web sites below.

Both need money for legal expenses, and to help move forward with new campaigns. Your contribution goes farther than usual because in these all-volunteer organizations, expenses are low and people are extraordinarily committed. You can donate by sending a check to the addresses below. Also, ACT UP Philadelphia can receive donations through its Web site, using either Paypal or iGive.com. Check the sites for the latest information.

In November 2003 ACT UP was listed as one of the top ten organizations having the most influence for social justice over the last 30 years; the list is at <http://inthe fray.com/html/article.php?sid=110&mode=thread&order=0>

ACT UP New York, Philadelphia Contacts

Each ACT UP chapter is a separate organization. There is no national office.

ACT UP New York:
<http://www.actupny.org/> -- mailing address
ACT UP, 332 Bleecker Suite G5, New York, NY 10014.

ACT UP Philadelphia:
<http://www.critpath.org/actup/> -- mailing address
ACT UP Philadelphia, Post Office Box 22439, Land Title Station, Philadelphia, PA 19110-2439.

Medical Information from Bangkok Conference:

Clinical Care Options Site

by John S. James

Patients can review some of the best overall medical reporting from the XV International Conference on AIDS (Bangkok, Thailand, July 11-16, 2004) at the Clinical Care Options site, <http://www.clinicaloptions.com/hiv/> This material is written primarily for medical professionals but it is freely available to anyone. Patients can skip around to find the information they need.

For example, try "Virtual Presentations: IAC Update 2004," <http://www.clinicaloptions.com/hiv/vp/iac2004/> (you will need to register for the site first, but registration is free). Scroll down and click "LAUNCH," for either "Part 1: Antiretroviral Therapy: Current Regimens, Novel Strategies, Resistance, and New Agents," or for "Part II: Pharmacology, Metabolic Complications, Hepatitis Coinfection, and Opportunistic Diseases." Then click "Begin Module" (which should appear in a new window). You will need to click again on the image on the right-hand side of the window. Then slides should start to display, with an audio explanation for most of them. Note that you do not need to watch the whole program, but can start anywhere by selecting the slide you want by name, in the margin on the left.

There is also a search box on every page.

A good dial-up Internet connection works quite well for these slide and audio presentations, although a high-speed connection may avoid some delays. You do *not* need to have PowerPoint software to use these modules and see the slides displayed. (They use Macromedia Flash, and work on almost all common browsers without the need to download any additional software.) The site also allows instructors to download PowerPoint slides to customize and use in their own lectures, and of course PowerPoint software is required for doing this.

AIDSVote: Election Information and Activism

More than 200 AIDS and other organizations and 2,700 individuals have endorsed the AIDSVote platform, put together by a nonpartisan group that informs candidates about AIDS issues and encourages individuals to vote. AIDSVote does not endorse candidates for office

Absentee Voter Drive

On August 24 AIDSVote announced a project with four other organizations [*POZ* magazine, Housing Works, the National Association of People with AIDS (NAPWA-US), and Community HIV/AIDS Mobilization Project (CHAMP)] to launch a major absentee voter drive. A new Web site provided by *POZ* allows people to request an absentee ballot online if they are eligible to vote absentee. (The rules differ by state. In some states, one can vote absentee for any reason or none at all; in states using new voting machines with no paper trail, some voters plan to vote absentee to make sure their vote is counted. But other states only allow absentee voting for specific reasons, such as travel or illness.)

The new voter site also allows people to change their address if necessary, or register to vote online.

"For anyone who thinks that they might not be able to vote due to drug side effects, a medical appointment or hospitalization, limited mobility, fatigue or lack of access to transportation, this technology can help make sure your vote isn't missed," said Charles King, president and CEO of New York City's Housing Works.

Caution: Deadlines may differ, but many states have registration deadlines 30 days before the November 2 election. And deadlines for absentee voting can vary greatly by state. If you need to register, change your address, or request an absentee ballot, it is better to check now

than to risk waiting until it is too late.

For more information see
<http://www.aidsvote.org> The voter
registration/absentee site is at
<http://electionimpact.votenet.com/poz/>

Elections: Widespread Misinformation on Who Can Vote

by John S. James

Recently we saw inaccurate stories about who can vote, in two Philadelphia newspapers. One said that those convicted of a felony could not vote for five years in Pennsylvania; the other implied that you did not need to be a U.S. citizen. Because of the importance of the November 2 election, and the fact that voter-qualification misinformation has circulated widely for years, we quote the official statement from the Web site of the Pennsylvania Department of State, as of August 10, 2004:

"The Commonwealth Court of Pennsylvania ruled on December 26, 2000, that the Pennsylvania law prohibiting convicted felons from registering to vote for five years after their release from prison is unconstitutional. Consequently, if completing an older version of the Voter Registration Mail Application (VRMA) form, a convicted felon who has been released from prison may make application to register to vote by striking through the felony conviction line at Section 9(2) on the VRMA and signing his or her name.

"[Please note that convicted felons who are incarcerated on the date of a primary or election are not eligible to vote, irrespective of whether they are registered. However, pretrial detainees and misdemeanants are eligible to apply to register to vote and/or to vote by absentee ballot if they otherwise qualify to vote under law.]" Quoted from

[http://www.dos.state.pa.us/voting/cwp/view.asp?
a=1192&q=443054](http://www.dos.state.pa.us/voting/cwp/view.asp?a=1192&q=443054)

Also note that Pennsylvania voters who move (even within the same county) must take identification with them the first time they vote at their new address (it does *not* have to be photo ID). First-time voters must also bring identification to the polls. In Pennsylvania, a list of approved forms of identification is at [http://www.hava.state.pa.us/hava/cwp/view.asp?
a=1189&q=442312](http://www.hava.state.pa.us/hava/cwp/view.asp?a=1189&q=442312) The ID list is also in the Pennsylvania Voter Handbook, which can be downloaded from the Department of State Web site, <http://www.hava.state.pa.us/> (click "Voting in PA"; then click "Pennsylvania Voter Guide."

Each state is different. You may want to watch for and correct inadvertent or deliberate misinformation that could intimidate people or otherwise keep them from voting.

New Report on Voter Intimidation Nationally

In August 2004 People for the American Way and the NAACP released "The Long Shadow of Jim Crow; Voter Intimidation and Suppression in America Today." It can be downloaded from <http://www.naacp.org> or <http://www.pfaw.org>

Nutrition: Call for Information -- What Has

Been Most Helpful to You?

by John S. James

We are preparing an article about how to find useful nutrition information for people with HIV, on the Web or elsewhere. If nutrition information or intervention has made a difference for you, you could help us.

(1) Can you recommend any Web sites, books, or other sources of information that were particularly useful to you?

(2) If you have worked with a nutritionist or other health-care professional knowledgeable about nutrition, how useful has that consultation been to you? How could it be improved? (We do not need names, as we are not doing a directory of professionals.)

(3) Have any particular nutritional interventions worked especially well for you? Have any been harmful?

Please reply by November 1, 2004, if possible. We prefer email, but you can also mail or phone us. Send email to aidsnews@aidsnews.org with the word "nutrition" (without the quotes) in the message Subject line. Or send mail to AIDS Treatment News, 1233 Locust St. 5th floor, Philadelphia, PA 19107. Or call toll-free: 1-800-TREAT-1-2. Be ready to leave a message on the voicemail if necessary.

Medical Marijuana Rescheduling Rally, Washington DC October 5

by John S. James

On October 5 in Washington DC, protesters will demand the rescheduling of marijuana so that Federal law will not stop doctors from prescribing it. According to Americans for Safe Access, a national coalition focusing solely on medical use of marijuana, if the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) accepts that

marijuana can have medical value, then the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) *must* recommend rescheduling. Marijuana is currently Schedule I (high abuse potential, no medical value); ASA wants it changed to schedule III (still a controlled substance, but doctors could prescribe it).

Both ACT UP New York and ACT UP Philadelphia have endorsed this action.

More information from ASA can be found at <http://www.SafeAccessNow.org> or by phone at 510-486-8083. For more information on the Washington protest, click "Stop the Federal War on Patients Forever" on the site.

Americans for Safe Access is also organizing patients' unions for persons with HIV, or with other conditions for which marijuana can provide benefit. You can request more information by phone (above) or by email to patientsunion@safeaccessnow.org

For More Information on Medical Marijuana

* The August 2004 *Scientific American* published a note suggesting that chemicals in marijuana may act directly against some brain cancers. Certain cannabinoids

inhibited several genes that are critical for allowing the tumors to form new blood vessels for themselves (which they must do in order to grow beyond a small size). Visit <http://www.sciam.com/> and search for Guzman (one of the researchers mentioned) to find the article, or search for cannabis or marijuana to find other articles on the subject as well. This work was done in Spain; the U.S. seldom allows research into potential benefits of marijuana.

* For a short, recent summary of the current U.S. legal situation on medical use, see <http://www.drugpolicy.org/marijuana/medical/>

* In 1988 a DEA's administrative law judge called marijuana "one of the safest therapeutically active substances known to man" and urged that it be made available for medical use. The DEA rejected his findings. From Judge Young's "Finding of Fact" ("the record shows the following facts to be uncontroverted"):

"First, the record on marijuana encompasses 5,000 years of human experience. Second, marijuana is now used daily by enormous numbers of people throughout the world. Estimates suggest that from twenty million to fifty million Americans routinely, albeit illegally, smoke marijuana without the benefit of direct medical supervision. Yet, despite this long history of use and the extraordinarily high numbers of social smokers, there are simply no credible medical reports to suggest that consuming marijuana has caused a single death.

"By contrast aspirin, a commonly used, over-the-counter medicine, causes hundreds of deaths each year."

For the full 1988 decision, see <http://www.medmjscience.org/Pages/reports/jyp1.bhtml>

In 2001, HHS ruled that marijuana had no medical value; six months later the DEA under U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft started raiding and closing marijuana

dispensaries that were operating in California in accordance with state law.

Other Major Drug Reform Organizations

Drug Policy Foundation,
<http://www.drugpolicy.org/>

Marijuana Policy Project,
<http://www.mpp.org/>

The National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML),
<http://www.norml.org/>

Empty Antibiotic Pipeline Critically Endangers Public: IDSA Report

by John S. James

In July 2004 the Infectious Diseases Society of American published *Bad Bugs, No Drugs* on the lack of new antibiotics being developed by pharmaceutical companies, while drug resistance to existing antibiotics rises rapidly. People should know:

* Drug-resistant bacterial infections kill tens of thousands of Americans every year. This year, almost 2,000,000 hospital patients in the U.S. will get these infections, and 90,000 of them will die. But anyone, even adults or children in perfect health, can be killed by antibiotic-resistant bacteria. And catastrophic epidemics could infect millions.

* People with immune deficiencies, including those with HIV, are at high risk.

* Resistance to antibiotics is greatly increasing now, "almost like a switch got triggered," as one expert put it. Infections once easily curable are becoming difficult or impossible to treat -- meaning that some common bacterial infections will kill most of the patients who get them.

* Starting over 10 years ago pharmaceutical companies mostly left the antibiotic field because it is not profitable. Antibiotics are less profitable than other drugs because they work so well so fast,